

The Cannibal King in the "Kedah Annals."

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The story of the cannibal king on pp. 11-17 of the "Hikayat Marong Mahawangsa" (*J. R. A. S., S. B., No. 72, May, 1916*), differs a good deal in setting and incident from the similar tale in Number 537 of Fausböll's series of the "Maha-Sutasoma-Jataka" (vol. V, p. 246 seq. of the translation by Francis in Cowell's edition): but these two tales have so many points of agreement that it is difficult to suppose they are unconnected. I shall mention a few of the chief differences, as they occur in the course of the narrative; but my main purpose will be to draw attention to points of resemblance.

The openings differ. In the Indian story the king of Benares develops cannibal propensities in accordance with Buddhist ideas of transmigration, because in a previous existence he has been a Yakkha or ogre; and he has occasion first to taste human flesh, because one day a dog steals his plate of meat and the king's cook (a man) dishes up instead a portion of flesh cut from a fresh corpse in the cemetery.

In the Malay story, the cannibal king of Kedah is the son of an ogress or *Gërgasi*; and he first tastes human blood, when one day his cook, a woman, cutting her finger by accident lets the blood drip into a vegetable curry and there is no time to prepare another dish.

Incidentally one may surmise that the detail of the "fresh corpse" in the Indian version is an instance of the old Buddhist custom (similar to the Parsi habit) of exposing corpses to be eaten by birds of prey; and one may compare Groeneveldt's "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca," *s.v.* Tun-Sun, in "Essays Relating to Indo-China, Second Series," vol. I, p. 240. where however the dying are so exposed.

After the opening the two stories agree in many details. In both the king takes great pleasure in his horrid meal, even before he is aware of its ingredients. In both, the cook is threatened with death in default of confession as to the *recipé!* In both, the cook confesses, and the king, so far from being shocked, orders more of the gruesome fare, battenning first on prisoners from the gaol and later kidnapping the bodies of innocent people to supply the royal table; until at last there is uproar in the realm.

In the Indian tale the cook is caught taking flesh from the body of a woman he has just killed; in the Malay, the king is attacked by a bravo and a great fight ensues. In both tales, the king's

ministers, moved by popular clamour, warn their master; and he rejecting the warning is expelled from his country, peaceably in the Indian version and taking his sword and cook with him, ignominiously in the Malay story after a desperate onslaught on the palace, whence he escapes by a private door.

In the Indian story, the king after a number of adventures in the jungle is converted from cannibalism by Sutasoma, an incarnation of the Buddha in a previous existence—for the "Jatakas" purport to be stories of the Buddha's earlier births: he is brought to Benares a changed man, and is welcomed by the son who reigns in his stead. In the Kedah version, the king mates with a girl of good family in a remote part of the country and, after once more escaping his enraged pursuers, is lost sight of; but the son of that union is restored to reign in the capital by virtue of the magical sagacity of an elephant in detecting the royal infant and by virtue of the king of Siam's warrant.

When it is remembered that in Buddhist countries the "Jatakas" are known not only to the literate but in popular folk-lore, it becomes reasonable to infer that the Kedah tale has been borrowed from a Siamese source. Man-eating ogres are usual enough; but in the two tales considered, coincidence of small detail seems to demand explanation more particular than the common uniformity of the human mind in the invention of folk-tales.

For a parallel in Sinhalese legendary history those interested may consult p. 234 of my "Catalogue of European Manuscripts in the India Office Library, vol. I, part I."